

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 /034 W
-----123539 291014Z /11
R 281250Z JUL 78
FM AMCONSUL CASABLANCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5659

C O N F I D E N T I A L CASABLANCA 2037

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB PINT MO
SUBJ: NEW LABOR CONFEDERATION ON THE HORIZON

REF: EMBASSY MEMCON "USFP ON THE MOROCCAN LABOR SCENE",
JULY 10, 1978

1. THE MILDLY LEFTIST POLITICAL PARTY, UNION SOCIALISTE DES FORCES POPULAIRES (USFP) HAS ESTABLISHED A "PERMANENT COORDINATING COMMISSION" FOR ITS SIX NATIONAL, PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS (TEACHERS, POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE, PHOSPHATE, HEALTH, SUGAR, AND RAILWAY EMPLOYEES). ALI YATA, LEADER OF THE MINISCULE COMMUNIST-FRONT POLITICAL PARTY, LE PARTI DU PROGRES ET DU SOCIALISME (PPS) COMMENTING IN THE PPS AL BAYANE FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL, JULY 20, PREDICTED THE EVENTUAL ESTABLISHMENT OF A USFP LABOR CONFEDERATION TO RIVAL THE PREDOMINANT UNION MAROCAINE DU TRAVAIL (UMT) WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ABOUT 70 PERCENT OF ALL STRIKES IN MOROCCO. THE EMBASSY HAS ALSO REPORTED THAT A USFP MILITANT DOES NOT RULE OUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A USFP CONFEDERATION. ALI YATA REGRETS THIS DEVELOPMENT WHICH HE SEES AS ONE LIKELY FURTHER TO WEAKEN THE WORKING CLASS. HE, NEVERTHELESS, ADMITS THE NEED FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM OF THE UMT TO MAKE IT MORE RESPONSIVE TO WORKER NEEDS AND REITERATES HIS SUPPORT FOR THE UMT AGAINST THE PROLIFERATION OF RIVAL LABOR CONFEDERATIONS. YATA CONCLUDES HIS COMMENTARY WITH A PLEA FOR THE PPS PRINCIPLE OF "LABOR UNITY AND
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DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE UMT."

2. COMMENT: AS EARLIER REPORTED, THE USFP TEACHERS AND PHOSPHATE UNIONS REPRESENT AT LEAST 50 PERCENT OF THE UNIONIZED EMPLOYEES IN THESE TWO SECTORS. IN THE OTHER UNIONS, ESPECIALLY AMONG RAILWAY AND POST OFFICE/TELEPHONE EMPLOYEES, THE USFP UNIONS REPRESENT A MINORITY. WHILE THE UMT REMAINS

STRONG AND IS MOST CERTAINLY THE PREFERRED LABOR CONFEDERATION OF THE PALACE, SOME DEGREE OF DEMOCRATIZATION SEEMS INEVITABLE AS CRITICISM MOUNTS ABOUT THE CORRUPTION AND AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP OF MAHJOUB BEN SEDDICK AND MOHAMED ABDER-RAZAK. THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE UMT IS NOW TWO YEARS OVERDUE WHICH MAY ALSO RELATE TO THE GROWING RESTIVENESS WITHIN UMT RANKS AND THE JOCKEYING FOR CONTROL BETWEEN BEN DESSICK AND HIS POPULAR DEPUTY. WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDUCT THE OUTCOME OF THESE VARIOUS RIVALRIES, IT SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT AS THE USFP GROWS IN STENGTH, THE UMT WILL BE COMPELLED TO REFORM ITSELF POSSIBLY BY ACCOMMODATING THE USFP UNIONS WITHIN ITS RANKS OR PERHAPS BY SACRIFICING BEN SEDDICK AND SOME OLDTIMERS TO MAKE ROOM FOR YOUNGER, MORE DYNAMIC LEADERS. THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE KING IS WILLING TO ALLOW THE USFP TO GAIN GROUND ON THE UMT WILL CERTAINLY INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS. HOWEVER, IT STILL SEEMS THAT THE PROCESS OF REFORMING OR PURGING THE UMT WILL BE A SLOW ONE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CASABL02037
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780311-1002
Format: TEL
From: CASABLANCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780711/aaaaairl.tel
Line Count: 80
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0576566b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1858697
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW LABOR CONFEDERATION ON THE HORIZON
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, MO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0576566b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014